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ABSTRACT

The further education of librarians has not been given sufficient consideration in the literature on the profession. Since a librarian is among other things, a custodian of books and therefore of knowledge and culture, he should keep himself in touch with the best and most up-to-date ways and means of making this knowledge available. In addition, he should keep abreast of new developments in his particular speciality and related fields. This monograph is a systematic presentation of one aspect of the librarian's post-professional education which is furthered through conferences, clinics, group work, institutes, lectures, staff meetings, symposia, workshops and similar assemblies, whether national or international. It defines the meaning of each of these terms and places the whole subject in the context of the librarian's constant need of acquaintance with new techniques and developments. It assesses all the advantages the profession can derive through its members' attendance at, and participation in conferences. Each method of interchange of ideas is scrutinized and suggestions are made for the better organization and running of conferences and group activities. Finally, the need for the establishment of a center for the organization, and promotion of all aspects of the librarian's continuing education is discussed. (Author)

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The Role of Conferences in the Further Education of Librarians

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A SCRUTINY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION
WITH PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

BY

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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CONTENTS

Introduction 7

Advantages of conferences 8

Social value of conferences 10

The right to attend conferences 11

The organisation of conferences 13

Exhibitions 16

Barriers of language 17

Post-professional Study Centre (PSC) 19

Publications 20

Readers' conferences 23

Clinics 24

Group work 25

Institutes 27

Lectures 28

Staff meetings 29

Symposia 31

Workshops 32

Introduction

In the literature of librarianship the words 'conference', 'meeting', 'seminar', 'symposium', 'discussion' and 'lecture' have been used as if they were interchangeable. However, fine shades of meaning could be distinguished to differentiate one from another: 'conference', 'seminar' and 'symposium' have an academic flavour whereas 'meeting', 'discussion' or 'lecture' evoke a slightly different set of associations. It has become necessary to qualify descriptively whenever any of these terms is used because current professional usage tends to be vague. A seminar in German universities (and in certain British and American universities) is 'a select group of advanced students associated for advanced study and original research under the guidance of a professor';[1] a conference is 'a formal meeting for consultation or discussion';[2] a symposium is 'a meeting or conference for discussion of some subject'.[3] The word 'meeting' is self-explanatory and its meaning includes all those gatherings where business of a formal kind is conducted. A 'discussion' may or may not be a formal occasion. A necessary element of any discussion would be the presentation and examination of different points of view even if the venue happens to be a smoky public house with the participants discussing professional matters in lighter vein. As 'lectures' are usually followed by 'discussions' it is difficult to distinguish one form of gathering from another if one wishes to use terms precisely and avoid overlapping. Therefore, unless otherwise stated, the word 'conference' is used here in a comprehensive generic sense to include all gatherings of librarians such as meetings, seminars, workshops, clinics, institutes, symposia, discussions and lectures. Furthermore, unless otherwise stated, the observations, criticisms and suggested improvements made in relation to one type of gathering are presumed to be generally applicable to the rest.

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1 *The shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principles* ... 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Advantages of conferences

By attending conferences delegates widen their knowledge, among other matters, of places, libraries and librarians. These seemingly valueless impressions help to provide the necessary background experience for understanding professional problems at deeper levels. 'Why have a conference? Would any other medium better achieve your purpose? Briefly, it is the best method we know of giving information and exchanging ideas of a subject of common interest with a number of people at the same time. A conference can accomplish much more than this, including improving attitudes, methods and procedures; solving problems and inspiring confidence and achieving a unity of purpose.'[4] Inklings of future professional trends could be gleaned by listening to research papers that are presented at conferences. 'Technical conferences are vital because they provide a mechanism for giving maximum effectiveness to new knowledge; it becomes more meaningful when related, categorized, and integrated with knowledge which has already been assimilated. Knowledge is a mighty force when used to stimulate thought and action. The technical conference is a place where people having new knowledge can meet and interact. A successful conference channels knowledge to serve current and future needs.'[5] A great deal must have been achieved by conferences that have stimulated thought, re-examined the basic professional assumptions and indicated new avenues of investigation.[6] 'A well organized conference provides an opportunity for conferrers to exchange information, evaluate proposed ideas, cross-pollinate views, and extend knowledge'.[7] Would it be a waste of time, money and energy if the *sole* purpose of a conference consisted in the mere exchange of in-

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[4] *Conference planning and administration* by O. K. Skelley London: Industrial Society, 1966 p. 1

[5] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 3

[6] 'A conference is an instrument of exchange, and the sharing of knowledge; so try to 'communicate'. Try not to stay with your old friends all the time, but make a point of meeting new ones.' *How to run a conference* by Marion Bieber London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968 p. 104

[7] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 4

formation? Information, it could be contended, is cheaply and effectively obtainable through documentary media. Although librarians are by training and experience experts in the art of acquiring and handling information; it should, however, never be overlooked that considerable amounts of information of an unrecorded kind could also be gathered at conferences: for instance, the casual remarks of research workers on matters pertaining to their studies. 'Mere exchange of information may not seem a sufficient conference objective, but even in highly specialized fields new knowledge is generated in such profusion that an exchange of really pertinent information is a refreshing experience. [8]

Regardless of a conference's success or failure in working out an agreed programme, the active or passive participation of librarians in the scrutiny of arguments would itself have contributed to their education. 'Passive participation' refers to the studying of conference reports without actually attending them. The ratiocinative processes that underlie the currents and cross-currents of opinion which eventually coalesce to determine policy are formative influences in the continuing education of librarians. Therefore, from the point of view of librarians' education, what matters more is not so much the policy that ultimately emerges as the mental activities that precede the determination thereof.

Conferences are suitable occasions for specialists to explain their work to and discuss it with laymen. But when a conference is solely for specialists, the question of making the proceedings intelligible to laymen does not, of course, arise. Specialists in widely separated fields of knowledge may not find themselves so intellectually alienated from each other if only they seize the opportunity of a conference for making comparative studies of their respective methodologies of research. Conferences help to bring together not only different groups of research workers but also individuals who are potentially capable of grouping themselves into teams. 'Presently, the problem is not limited to personal contacts between individuals; there is a problem of contacts between groups, since team-working is increasingly replacing individual work.'[9] Those librarians who are desirous

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[8] Ibid.

[9] 'What are the most fruitful methods of communication' by Rudolf Morf (In *International congress organization: theory and practice* Brussels: Union of International Associations, 1961 p. 21)

of undertaking research may not know where or how exactly to begin; not infrequently, their problem is to find an area that has been insufficiently investigated. Conferences provide opportunities for such persons to consult with leading authorities and research scholars.

The 'stars' of a library would seem less remote and would be better understood when expressing themselves orally before audiences: a certain warmth, intimacy and informality are conveyed through the magic of the spoken word in contrast to the written. For a domineering chief librarian who is feared by his staff because of his bullying ways, the experience of being cornered and challenged at every turn during a discussion could be psychologically chastening. The puffed egos need deflation, even if only temporarily, lest readers be deprived of devoted service by librarians who are clearly wanting in humility. Regardless of whether animated discussions are sparked off by ideological conflicts, frayed tempers, impatience or sheer malice, such occasions are usually enlivening and indeed even entertaining. It is observed that non-controversial conferences, especially those convened with the avowed object of asserting professional interests, frequently foster a spirit of fellowship within the profession. Even the occasional evocation of such a spirit cannot fail to have a beneficial impact on those librarians who are indifferent to the importance of co-operative team work in their official lives. Because journals of librarianship report and/or scrutinise the ideas expressed at conferences, the speakers at these meetings are, in effect, addressing vast unseen audiences at home and abroad. That only conferences which have been productive of tangible results deserve to be regarded as successful is a narrowly utilitarian concept. The benefits accruing from conferences are not reckonable in monetary terms.

Social value of conferences

A library conference is not merely a matrix of bibliographical ideas but a meeting of human faces as well. The subtle psychological significance of the social side to conferences must be considered in any evaluation of the importance of these occasions.[10] The cutting edges of ideological differences get

[10] The following words epitomise the social value of conferences:

'The Californian Library Association holds meetings and conferences, the latter elaborate and educative affairs amidst the lavish surroundings of luxurious hotels. Children's librarians are well represented in the American Library Association and may share in the work and fun of the conferences wherever they are held.'

smoothened out gradually at a party, dinner or dance. The warm handshakes and disarming smiles too contribute to the formation of that vital consensus of thought and feeling, the lack of which, in the past, has had unfavourable effects on the sense of unity in the library profession. The cohesion of a profession does not depend solely on professional self-interest, there is also the softening impact of the human touch. In the manner of Rotarians, it is possible for groups of librarians to meet regularly for luncheons in order to discuss professional as well as non-professional matters. These occasions do not necessarily have to depend on the stimulation of formal talks for their success. It has been rightly observed that 'ideas and opinions flow freely over a good meal. Board Members also attend luncheons and banquets and must often be quite surprised to hear an honest discussion of problems which would never come their way in formal Board Meetings. [11]

The significance of gossip at conferences cannot be dismissed lightly, especially during times when the professional press shows signs of becoming censorious of the seamy side of librarianship.

The right to attend conferences

Should a charter of librarians' rights ever be drawn up, the right to attend conferences is one that cannot justifiably be excluded therefrom. But the right to attend conferences will

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'Dinners and parties of the various social bodies connected with the library are numerous. Lectures by an outstanding educationist or librarian are often the main feature at Library Association dinners. These prove attractive and are well attended. The most popular event in the field of California Library Service to Children is the breakfast arranged for authors and illustrators of children's books. This is held in Los Angeles, usually in the de luxe Statler-Hilton Hotel. Children's librarians from all over California attend this function. The honoured guests give short talks about their recent publications, after which their books are displayed for examination and sale, and they are pestered with supplying autographs. Authors and librarians often meet for informal chats, and this experience can be mutually pleasant and rewarding.'
'Children's librarianship, Pacific, U.S.A.' by Edith Sullivan *Library Association Record* Vol. 68 No. 3 March 1966 p. 85

[11] 'A need to confer' by Joyce Taylor *Assistant Librarian* Vol. 59 No. 5 May 1966 p. 104

remain a meaningless abstraction if librarians find themselves impeded by various practical difficulties in the exercise of that right. In many libraries the right to attend conferences is a jealously guarded privilege that is bestowed only on those who have rendered yeoman service for long periods. Such a restrictive policy necessarily operates against the interests of the younger and the newer recruits to the profession. The selected delegates to a conference may not be those who are most suited to derive the maximum benefits from such attendance. As it is a debatable point whether the intellectual content of the proceedings of a conference is better assimilated by senior or junior librarians, it is desirable that librarians of all levels, including intending professionals, should be allowed to attend. Furthermore, all persons having a genuine interest in library matters deserve to be welcomed. The participation of non-librarians from the academic world could especially vitalise the proceedings of conferences on account of their comparatively disinterested objectivity.

The widespread practice of setting off the time spent on conferences against vacation leave is to be deplored. This practice probably originated in the mistaken belief that conferences were a means of shirking work. 'It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that any employer should be willing, in principle, to allow time off at least for his staff to attend professional meetings.'[12] If every librarian successfully insisted on attending every library conference, then, it is possible theoretically, that besides work getting seriously disrupted in most libraries, at least some would have to close down temporarily. Such a disturbing predicament may be avoided through well organised rota schemes so that each person gets his turn of attending conferences. Skeleton staffs in libraries during conference time would ensure the non-disruption of routine duties. The non-professional staff could continue to handle the mechanical and routine tasks such as the charging and discharging of books, reservations, overdues, etc. Therefore the temporary absence of the entire professional staff from a library may cause a suspension of professional and bibliographical work only.

The short-sighted policy of permitting conference attendance only at one's own private expense and time has hampered

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[12] 'Education' by M. J. Ramsden (In *Working conditions in libraries: a survey;* edited by Peter Jordan Association of Assistant Librarians, 1968 p. 15)

the continuing education of librarians.[13] The operation of this policy has curtailed the exercise of the right to attend conferences. An incentive to increased participation in conferences would be the reimbursement of all legitimate expenses such as travel fares and conference fees. The principle that conference attendance is a vital part of post-professional education and that, therefore, any expenses incurred in such matters are justified by the resulting benefits in the form of increased efficiency, new techniques and modernisation, must be made to loom large in the minds of those responsible for library finance and budgeting.

The organisation of conferences

Marion Bieber advocated the production of a *basic document* of 500 to 1,000 words explaining the purpose of a conference.

'This should be sent to every participant and it should be read by every member of staff connected with the conference.'

'The background paper should describe (a) the subject of the conference, (b) sponsorship and direction, (c) the aims of the conference, (d) the procedure of the conference, (e) the form of report to be produced after the conference, (f) date, place and approximate size of conference, (g) conditions of participation (these might be set out in individual letters of invitation, especially if conditions vary between different types of delegates).'[14] The production of such a basic document is an

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[13] Canada's enlightened policy of encouraging conference attendance is worthy of emulation. 'Conferences there are a must. Everyone goes and there is no avoiding them, they must not be missed.'

'Only a small proportion of a library staff can attend the Canadian Library Association conference — unless it happens to be held comparatively locally — as this may involve a return journey of five or six thousand miles, but the Provincial Library Association conference, which is unlikely to mean travelling more than five or six hundred miles, is a different matter. The whole library staff, whether professional or clerical, turns out to some of the meetings. Libraries are manned by skeleton staffs — or sometimes closed — to give all members a chance to attend. Library Boards (i.e. committees) budget a certain amount of money each year and all or part conference expenses are paid for all staff attending.'

'A need to confer' by Joyce Taylor *Assistant Librarian* Vol. 59 No. 5 May 1966 p. 104

[14] *How to run a conference* by Marion Bieber London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968 pp. 13-14

essential preliminary step in conference organisation. The responsibility for drafting this statement is best borne by the main organising committee of a conference. The giving of the widest possible publicity to a conference in the professional, national and local press causes the attendance of many interested persons. Their participation may be either 'active' as in the reading of a paper or 'passive' as when an 'observer' merely listens.

It has been suggested that the best time for a conference is 'usually during the off-peak season of activity in the particular trade or profession. Avoid, if possible, choosing a date which coincides with the conference of any other organisation in your field of interest. The main advantage of a weekend is that, in most cases, it does not encroach upon the working week. A conference of clergy, however, might prefer a mid-week conference! [15] With librarians, however, a generally, acceptable 'off-peak season of activity' is difficult to find: college and university libraries are heavily used during term-time; industrial and special libraries are usually closed during weekends and public libraries are often busiest on Saturdays. Travelling is unpleasant in the winter months. Many librarians take their holidays during the long summer months. Therefore the spring and autumn seasons are apparently the best periods for the holding of conferences. As the climatic seasons of different countries do not always synchronise, the timing of international conferences to the satisfaction of all parties can be a matter of some difficulty.

The selection of venues for conferences should be influenced by considerations that are likely to accord with the special tastes of librarians. Therefore, provided that accommodation and other facilities are available, there is no reason why famous libraries should not be chosen as venues for library conferences. Between conference sessions librarians could browse through the shelves and familiarise themselves with special collections, rare books, incunabula, unique manuscripts and the like. The architectural features of ancient libraries too deserve to be studied for their utilitarian as well as their intrinsic aesthetic merit. 'The location in which you hold your conference may be predetermined by special circumstances. When your choice is quite free, however, choose a place which in itself will con-

[15] *Conference planning and administration* by O. K. Skelley London: Industrial Society, 1966 pp. 2-3

tribute to the enjoyment and success of the conference, either because of its beautiful surroundings, its amenities, or its tradition. [16] But the convening of a conference at an ideal venue, does not, of course, in itself guarantee its ultimate success.

Non-residential conferences are easier to organise than residential ones. Residential conferences for short or long periods of time and week-end schools have some of the advantages that are the attributes of monastic living. A slower pace of living promotes cool reflection. The unhurried atmosphere that pervades many residential conferences is conducive to quiet contemplation. It is debatable whether the increased familiarity with one another resulting from communal living either strengthens or reduces those personal prejudices among delegates that so often cloud the clear-sighted consideration of issues. When conferences are spread over several days as would be the case with most residential ones, good use could be made of the long intervals between sessions, if there are any, by the organisation of visits to places that are likely to interest librarians. Scenes of local history and cathedral libraries in the vicinity of a conference venue are obvious places of interest. A list of secondary places of interest would include museums, art galleries, publishing houses, trade fairs and exhibitions of office equipment.

The speakers selected to address conferences are usually experts. But because experts may sometimes not see the wood for the trees, it is desirable that the choice of speakers should wherever possible be widened to include laymen also. Minorities holding unpopular, unorthodox, unconventional or radical points of view often run the risk of rejection at the hands of conference selection committees. That the organisers of conferences might, in effect, become groups of censors of 'dangerous' views through the misuse of their powers of selecting speakers is an alarming possibility that has to be watched. The PSC should encourage the holding of conferences on all professional matters and especially on unpopular subjects that deserve to be discussed more thoroughly. Thus through the selection of topics for conferences attention could be drawn to minority points of view, unexplored possibilities, new problems, constructive suggestions, grave professional grievances and the like. It is not certain whether persons who happen to be well acquainted with the subjects under discussion necessarily do

[16] Ibid.

well as impartial chairmen. The safe course would be to have as chairmen only those who are reputed for their judicious qualities of mind.

Procedural questions, points of order and constitutional issues are often raised at meetings. As the determination of such questions calls for legal abilities; whenever it is possible, the persons raising such matters should endeavour to give prior notice. Since the time available is usually restricted it is vital to confine the proceedings to essentials. It is advisable to restrain the inclinations of those prone to unjustifiable digressions. Unless a conference is legally obliged to transact a certain amount of purely formal business such as, for instance, the reading of minutes or the election of office bearers, it is suggested that precious savings in time could be effected if such matters were conducted through the post instead. Unless a conference is obliged to issue a policy statement at the end of its deliberations, little is gained by counting votes after every controversial discussion: the anxiety to pass resolutions could result in hurried compromises and acrimonious personal intrigues. If conference programmes do not provide for reasonably long intervals between sessions, the opportunities for 'lobbying' and social intercourse between delegates would be reduced. Delegates should be encouraged to criticise the organisational shortcomings of conferences. They may have many constructive proposals for reform which, if implemented, could well arrest the continuance of recognised errors in the planning of conferences.

Exhibitions

The provision at conferences of displays and exhibitions which directly or indirectly have a bearing on professional work, enhance the educational value of these occasions. Conferences provide excellent opportunities to display new publications, the latest technical equipment and a host of ancillary objects relating to libraries.[17] A periodic 'Ideal Library Exhibition' is envisaged

[17] 'The opportunity for the display and sale of appropriate books and literature at a conference is irresistible. A suitable site should be chosen in a prominent position, leaving sufficient room for people to gather around, without blocking the way. The display should be as attractive as possible. Light wire stands are obtainable for elevating the books. Order forms should be available, and one display copy of every publication should be retained unsold. A cash float is

where commerce and industry could display articles of interest to librarians.

It has been thought that commercial exhibitions tend to distract attention from real issues by introducing an element of levity. 'The conference organization is focused on creating an atmosphere free of distraction, conducive to an intimate interchange of ideas; great care is exercised to limit conference attendance, to balance conference representation, to distribute pre-conference orientation materials, to scientifically arrange conference seating — all to insure creative group participation. A commercial exhibit introduces a festive or "party" element which completely destroys the climate of serious communication so essential to conference needs.'[18] No exhibition that is directly or indirectly related to professional matters could rightly be regarded as a distraction. Many exhibitions and bookfairs have an obvious commercial slant but so do many library journals that review non-professional publications and carry advertisements. As the spirit of commercialism is part and parcel of every capitalist society, all a discerning librarian can do is to be alert to the various pressures, commercial or otherwise, that condition his intellectual environment. Usually no delegate is obliged to visit an exhibition. If an exhibition happens to be a distraction, one may venture to ask: why not have a distraction then to lessen the mental strains of conference participation? It is largely the subjective attitude of a librarian that determines whether an exhibition is viewed with seriousness or levity of disposition.

Barriers of language

If the provision of facilities for the translation of conference proceedings from one language into another becomes a standard practice, then certain consequences seem inevitable: first, the language barrier would not operate against those potential

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required and a receipt book for anyone requiring a receipt.'

'If the publications of organisations other than the sponsors' are to be put on display, they should be ordered well in advance and delivered, where possible, direct to the conference venue. Keep free literature separate from books that are for sale.' *Conference planning and administration* by O. K. Skelley London: Industrial Society, 1966 pp. 47-48

[18] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 20

delegates as well as speakers who at present are deterred from attending conferences because of this obstacle; second, the cosmopolitan character of conferences would almost certainly have a favourable impact on the continuing education of librarians through the international exchange of ideas; third, the experience of meeting foreigners would stimulate librarians to study the advanced library practices of other countries. The interpretation of speeches from one language into another could be either 'consecutive' or 'simultaneous'. Consecutive translations are more time-consuming as the interpretation of a speech cannot commence until its completion.[19] The prepublication of conference papers in all the official languages of a conference would eliminate the need for interpretation except during discussion time when, ideally, simultaneous interpretation is preferable to consecutive. The barriers of distance and language could also be lessened through the presentation of papers in translation and in absentia so long as the authors manage to find suitable local sponsors to champion their ideas.

A multi-lingual glossary of librarianship terms that is specially designed for consultation at the international conferences of librarians is a pressing need. [20] The compilation of a work of this kind requires the co-operation of many linguists, librarians and, most importantly, of the various national Library Associations. The inclusion of many of the minor languages of the world cannot but enhance the value of such a compilation. The availability of a glossary for the international conferences of librarians would greatly reduce, if not altogether eliminate, many misunderstandings that are basically linguistic in origin.

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[19] The Nuremberg trials of the famous war criminals were conducted in English, French, Russian and German when full-scale simultaneous interpretation was first used. It has been estimated that the trials would have lasted considerably longer than the nearly one year taken had consecutive interpretation been used instead.
Conference interpreting by Patricia E. Longley
London: Isaac Pitman, 1968 p. 6-7

[20] The following multi-lingual glossary (English, Russian, French, Italian, Spanish and German), although not specially designed for librarians, could serve as a convenient model for the proposed publication:
Conference terminology: a manual for conference-members and interpreters ... (Glossaria Interpretum series)
Elsevier Publishing Co., 2nd revised edition, 1962

Post-professional Study Centre (PSC)

There is a pressing need for the establishment of a Post-professional Study Centre (PSC) for the organisation, direction and encouragement of librarians' further education.

The PSC could stimulate interest in conferences through the following ways:

(a) By collecting all publications relating to conferences that have a direct or an indirect bearing on librarianship. The collection of tape-recorded proceedings too would be at the disposal of every bona fide borrower.

(b) By organising an annual 'State of the art' conference with the object of providing a forum for the continual review of new professional developments. On such occasions it would be relevant to discuss even those advances in other fields of learning that are deemed to have a direct or an indirect bearing on librarianship either now or in the future.

For the dissemination of information relating to past and future conferences with a direct or an indirect bearing on librarianship, the PSC should bring out 2 periodical publications:

Conference index (published quarterly)

The contents of the proceedings of conferences held anywhere in the world, and not necessarily confined to librarianship, would be analytically indexed: only items having a direct or an indirect bearing on librarianship and deemed to further the cause of post-professional education would be included.[21]

Future conferences (published annually with monthly supplements)

Through such a periodical the PSC would keep librarians informed of all future meetings, both at home and abroad, that are deemed to have a direct or an indirect bearing

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[21] The scope of the following publication is confined to the holdings of one library:
Index of conference proceedings received by the NLL (National Lending Library for Science and Technology)

on librarianship.[22] Because the listing of every meeting would be an enormous undertaking, only those meetings that are deemed to promote the cause of post-professional education would be selected for inclusion. These periodically revised lists of meetings would include references to workshops, exhibitions, readers' conferences, conferences, symposia, institutes, courses of study, clinics, lectures and the like. Each entry would contain all the known essential details relating to a conference: the official title, the venue, the duration and the dates, the languages used, the conference fees, the names of the sponsoring persons and/or organisations, the conference themes, the names of the speakers, etc.

Publications

It would be desirable to circulate brief biographical accounts of *all* the delegates to a conference together with the agenda and the other conference papers. These statements could refer to the publications of delegates and especially to their special fields of interest. With the establishment of a system of post-professional education, the benefits of continuing education would spread, gradually perhaps, from the few to the many and eventually to all librarians. The change of emphasis from the principal speakers to the delegates at large is an expression of the same tendency.

The danger of distorted press-reports of conference proceedings cannot altogether be avoided but remedial measures designed to reduce this hazard may be taken in advance. The speakers could be asked to produce abstracts of their speeches in addition to the complete scripts. These documents could be supplemented with an authorised version of the discus-

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[22] Two useful guides for future meetings are the following:
World list of future international meetings
Part 1: Meetings in the fields of science, technology, medicine & agriculture
Part 2: Meetings in the social, cultural, humanistic & commercial fields.
Washington, D.C.: U.S.Govt. Printing Office (A quarterly with monthly supplements)
Continuing education for librarians — conferences, workshops, and short courses 1968-69
Chicago, Illinois: Office for Library Education, American Library Association, Dec 1967

sions. By giving these communiques to the press in time, the chances of newspapermen providing their own not unprejudiced accounts of events would be lessened, if not altogether removed.

Those contributing papers should be given long notice: the preparation of stimulating and thoughtful papers cannot be rushed but requires time for cool reflection. The reading of a paper at a conference is often the culmination of months of painstaking study, research and reflection. The listeners react to a paper according to their states of preparation which seldom equal that of the lecturer. Persons who are knowledgeable may interrupt the proceedings to correct an error or make a worthwhile contribution during discussion time. Shyness and the fear of ridicule or criticism may deter some from airing their views in public. There is another kind of listener who refrains from participation, not on account of such inhibitory psychological factors, but owing to the non-availability of facts and statistics to buttress an argument. The quality of discussions at conferences inevitably suffers because frequently the degree of preparedness of the audience is unequal to that of the principal speakers. The pre-publication of conference papers secures greater audience participation in discussions: a 'pre-warned audience' becomes a 'pre-armed audience'. No one can be taken by surprise: questionable references and the implications of proposals would have been checked and analysed. The pre-publication of speeches together with lists of references and sources of information would give all future participants time and opportunity to study and reflect and so lessen the extent of their unpreparedness. As with solicitors whose duty it is to brief counsel, equally it may be regarded a duty of the organisers of conferences in the future to provide printed briefs and data to enliven the quality of observations, remarks and comments proferred during discussion time. The issue is not whether librarians, in their capacity as information scientists, are really in need of bibliographical assistance: the chances of obtaining broader areas of agreement are better if all the conferrers rely on a common set of facts and figures. In such a situation, if someone dissents from an emerging consensus, it becomes not only easy but profitable to discover the causes for disagreement. One of the objectives of a conference should be not only to define the areas of agreement but also to unravel the different points of view outside the common ground. 'In order to provide a .common background knowledge in all the Seminarians, preliminary reading was assigned.'

'This reading consisted of appropriate chapters and articles in a variety of publications: . . . '[23] Between the pre-distribution of conference papers and the commencement of a conference a reasonably long period of time should be allowed to elapse so that the conferrers would have had sufficient time to read and reflect. Furthermore, if a paper has been circulated before a conference commences, then a speaker could restrict himself to presenting a summary or the highlights of it so that more time is made available for the ensuing discussion. Would the pre-publication of conference papers take away from the spontaneity of a discussion that results from a talk? Improvised speeches, expressing rushed intellectual responses, are too often ill-considered and are usually uttered in the heat of the moment. The pre-publication of papers would, on the other hand, encourage the making of scholarly contributions and studied comments. This is what we should aim at if we bear in mind the part played by conferences in post-professional education. The submission of explanatory memoranda as supplements to papers of a very technical nature would be an helpful practice. Unless the transactions of a conference are well indexed the retrieval of information becomes cumbersome and wasteful of time.[24]

Delegates who subject themselves to the strain of note taking neither make notes satisfactorily nor follow the proceedings uninterruptedly. 'One of the advantages of giving delegates a report of the conference is that it frees them from the necessity of taking notes, and enables them to concentrate on the speaker.' [25] Whether the proceedings of conferences should be recorded verbatim or recorded in the form of edited versions is a controversial matter. 'Individuals who oppose the one extreme, verbatim recording of everything, advance three principal arguments: life is too short to read all the drivel that appears on a verbatim transcription; complete recording inhibits free conferrer expression; access to complete recordings encourages prospective attenders to receive conference informa-

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[23] 'The Rutgers seminar for library administrators' by William B. Ready *College and Research Libraries* Vol. 18 No. 4 July 1957 p. 282

[24] The lack of an index to the following work is a deplorable omission: *The Brasenose conference on the automation of libraries;* edited by John Harrison & Peter Laslett
London: Mansell Information, 1967

[25] *Conference planning and administration* by O. K. Skelley
London: Industrial Society, 1966 p. 88

tion at home without suffering the inconvenience of contributing personally at the meeting. Those opposed suggest that complete formal papers be published along with only the highlights of general discussion.'[26] Since flashes of genius may lie buried with the so-called 'drivel' and especially because what constitutes 'drivel' is a matter of opinion and taste, the safest course would be the publication of verbatim reports. It is a hypothetical point that 'access to complete recordings encourages prospective attenders to receive conference information at home without suffering the inconvenience of contributing personally at the meeting.'[27] On the other hand, consequent to reading the verbatim reports many an otherwise hesitant librarian may feel impelled to attend conferences after realising how much he had missed by not attending them in the past. The suggestion that the formal papers should be published 'along with only the highlights of general discussion'[28] would necessarily entail the introduction of an element of editorial censorship especially because the points in discussions that warrant inclusion in reports are seldom easily decided. Even editors who write impartially seldom succeed in absolutely dispelling doubts as to whether the gists of speeches are fairly and accurately reported. An editor could pass the task of reducing the transcripts to a presentable style to the authors themselves provided that the latter are willing to undertake this responsibility. The excited verbal exchanges as well as the rulings from the chair are usually omitted from the edited versions of conference proceedings. The Hansard-like verbatim reports are not only authentic accounts of what were actually said and done but also help to convey something of the atmosphere of a conference.

Readers' conferences

In the Soviet Union where the pedagogic rôle of the librarian is stressed even to the extent of overshadowing his other functions, readers' conferences play an important part in mass education. Such conferences require great preparation in the form of exhibitions, posters, books and critical articles. The

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[26] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 24

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

provision of critical articles and reviews helps the formation of personal opinions and attitudes. In the central library of Rostov-on-Don in February, 1955, there was a readers' conference on Valentin Yushenko's novel *Ever with thee* (Vsegda s toboi), dealing with life in the post-war German Democratic Republic.[29] Two hundred readers read the book and themes were recommended to them though they were not to confine themselves to the themes. The author spoke of the experiences and creative ideas underlying his novel and then eleven readers analysed and commented on it from various points of view, such as language, action, etc. Although some of the comments were regarded as controversial and ill-informed, all were thought interesting, and this helped the formation of a collective opinion. The widespread and frequent organisation of such readers' conferences here, especially for the popularly based public libraries, would undoubtedly help to establish an increased reader-librarian liaison. Librarians have to know the needs of their readers the service of whom must always be a supreme consideration. The lack of sufficient opportunities for librarians to get to know their readers has been a lamentable feature of librarianship. Of the many solutions that may be suggested, an effective one would be readers' conferences, organised by librarians, where the joint participation of librarians and readers results in an increased mutual understanding of each others' needs and problems. Conferences on particular authors, books or subjects have an obvious bearing on librarians' post-professional studies. The scope of readers' conferences may occasionally be extended to include librarianship problems as well. The layman's voice is important because to serve him is the raison d'être of our profession. Here, then, is a common forum for librarians and readers to thrash out matters of mutual concern.

Clinics

Librarians will be seriously handicapped in their continuing education unless generous provision is made for their technical education, especially on account of the increasing mechanisation of library operations. Clinics have been described as 'instruction-

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[29] 'On readers' conferences' by L. Fatelevich
Bibliotekar (U.S.S.R.) 7th July 1955 pp. 15-19
(Library Science Abstract No. 5518)

al classes which utilize equipment to teach current theory and practice (often entailing apparatus installation, operation, and maintenance).'[10] A conference on computers in libraries, for example, would be seriously lacking unless there were clinics where delegates could study the practical applications of computers. Through the imparting of technical training with the aid of clinics, the traditional bias toward the humanities and the social sciences in the education of librarians would be to some extent corrected.

Group work

Large assemblies cannot conveniently delve into the many aspects of a problem unless selected topics for investigation are delegated to smaller groups of persons or committees. Chiefly in order to effect savings in time, groups of delegates are usually charged with the responsibility of scrutinising the *details* of questions, and later, of reporting their findings to the plenary sessions of conferences: a practice that is apparently based on the view that smaller groups are superior to larger ones for the efficient, critical, thorough and meticulous examination of issues. The informal and comparatively uninhibited atmosphere surrounding the gatherings of smaller groups, thoughtfully organised to accord with the special fields of interest of delegates, probably evoke fuller, franker and freer contributions from many. The details of proposals, therefore, are perhaps best deliberated in smaller groups.

The findings of the smaller groups, when reported to the plenary sessions of a conference, help the formation of a collective view. The task of evolving a consensus of opinion by a conference is, therefore, made less difficult on account of the meticulous preliminary examination of questions by these smaller groups. It is not suggested here that a collective view, in so far as this is achievable, is an end in itself. It may sometimes be the wiser course, though not the one usually preferred, to accept the fact that there are unresolved divergent ideas rather than to iron out differences either for reasons of expediency or for the expression of a supposed collective view. 'Without doubt a group can dilute potent ideas, dull keen insight, scar sensible

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[10] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 54

proposals, and compromise flawless plans into oblivion; but *individual creativity need not be submerged in group conformity*. Productive, resourceful, efficient problem-solving conferences are possible.'[31] Group activities induce and promote the spirit of teamwork. The success of a common venture such as a group survey or a group research project depends much on the jettisoning of those psychologically based personality conflicts that impede real co-operation. Because collective intellectual endeavours necessarily impose on the individuals who constitute a group a certain obligation to compromise frequently, it could be argued that group research results in the stifling of creative thinking. Although group decisions are usually reached through mutual concessions, it is fortunate for post-professional education that the act of thinking will always remain, after all, an individual and private matter. One difficulty arising from a group work system is that a librarian cannot physically attend more than one group meeting at a time. But if group meetings are arranged at different times to enable delegates to participate in the work of several groups, then the duration of a conference would get inconveniently prolonged. Therefore, it is recommended that delegates should be allowed to participate in the work of as many groups as they wish, indirectly and in absentia, through the submission of memoranda, research findings, suggestions and the like.

No library functions in a social vacuum: the obligation to tailor the policies of a library to conform to those of an overshadowing institution is particularly strong in the case of libraries serving colleges, universities, firms, research institutions, learned societies and the like. Therefore it is urged that librarians should be allowed to attend the meetings of their institutions where policy matters are discussed and/or determined. 'I have found it well worthwhile to arrange for information scientists to attend senior level committee meetings which deal with such topics as research planning, progress and the application of research results, including the transition from research to full-scale production.'[32]

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[31] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 119

[32] 'Keeping in touch with the needs of information users' by P. E. Colinese (In *Proceedings of the second conference* at Jesus College, Oxford 11-13 July 1966 Institute of Information Scientists pp. 64-65)

Institutes

Through the instrumentality of institutes[33] it is possible to initiate research into many aspects of librarianship. Anyone is free to suggest topics that are deserving of investigation but the PSC is expected to be particularly resourceful in this respect owing to its overall responsibility for the continuing education of librarians. The institute is a particularly suitable device for those librarians who seek the training that accrues from involvement in research work but who, unfortunately, for various reasons can only spare a few weeks of their time for this purpose but not prolonged periods. 'The institute differs from the conference in that it is ordinarily organized around a single topic or type of library activity, such as education for librarianship, or library work with children, and is consequently more intensive and smaller in size. The institute is frequently of longer duration than a conference and may, in fact, when it extends over a period of several weeks, constitute an informal course.'

'Among the most successful and valuable series of institutes have been those of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. These institutes, held in the summer and lasting about a week, have dealt with such topics as personnel administration in libraries, the acquisition and cataloging of books, the practice of book selection, library extension, and the reference function of the library. The papers of the Chicago institutes have been published and constitute a valuable contribution to professional literature.'

'The institute need not be so elaborate as are those which have been held at Chicago, but its main features remain about the same: selection of a topic involving either a controversial subject, one which presents unsolved problems, or one for which, for some other reason, there is a need or demand for thorough consideration; breaking up of the main topic into sub-topics; selection of competent speakers and discussion leaders; and dissemination, in some form, of the proceedings of the institute.'

'Although institutes need not necessarily be organized by a library school, they are likely to be most profitable for all

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[33] An institute has been defined as 'a brief course of instruction or seminars (as for teachers or poultrymen) on business or professional problems.'
Webster's third new international dictionary of the English language unabridged London: G. Bell, 1961

concerned if they are held at a university with its library facilities and appropriate meeting places. A university locale will usually enable participants to live and eat together and will thus foster informal discussion and the interchange of ideas and opinions.'

'The institute is a particularly worthwhile device for advancing librarianship in special or limited subjects which it would not be practicable or possible for the average school to include regularly in its curriculum, or in ones which, because of local conditions and needs, seem to call for thorough consideration at a particular time.' [34]

Lectures

The programmes of conferences could be embellished through the inclusion of interesting lectures by men of letters on subjects that have a direct or an indirect bearing on librarianship. These lectures do not necessarily have to be relevant to the themes of conferences, for it is likely that over-worked delegates would regard these talks as welcome diversions. 'One way to establish a worthwhile lecture series is to award lectureships as a tribute to outstanding achievement. The granting of lectureship honors and awards serves at least three purposes. Deserving individuals are recognized and often awarded monetary prizes; the problem of enlisting well-qualified lecturers is simplified; an avenue for additional conference publicity is opened.' [35]

'Most of us have endured lifeless meetings where the speaker delivers his formal talk and concludes by answering a few restrained questions from the audience. Since the collective audience possesses a pool of knowledge far greater than any single speaker, the success of a meeting would be assured if audience knowledge could be tapped.' [36] If the speaker on a given subject happens to be an expert it is unlikely that a lay audience 'possesses a pool of knowledge far greater than any single speaker.'[37] The vitality and the profundity of a discussion

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[34] *Education for librarianship* by J. Periam Danton Paris: UNESCO, 1949 pp. 69-70

[35] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 pp. 53-54

[36] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 43

[37] Ibid.

depend on an eager willingness to probe questions with a critical frame of mind and not solely on the quantum of knowledge of the speaker vis-à-vis the audience. Knowledge merely provides the data for a discussion whereas it is the spirit of inquiry that really activates it.

Impatient chairmen are prone to rush through discussion time as though the remarks and questions of listeners were signs of impertinence and discourtesy: a deplorable practice because it is frequently the case that a lecture is not as interesting as its ensuing discussion. A policy of allocating more time for discussions would entail prolonged meetings with the attendant risk of causing mental and physical fatigue in all participants. Alternatively, lecturers could be requested to shorten the duration of their talks provided that no violence is thereby done to the substance of their lectures.

Staff meetings

Much is detracted from the value of staff meetings when the right of attendance is restricted to selected persons: in many libraries, unfortunately, junior staff members are debarred. Professional issues are best deliberated on the basis of full, free and frank discussions among all concerned with the running of a library. If the arguments adduced at meetings are to be considered on their own merits, then any emphasis on the hierarchical status of the participants would seem both irrelevant and petty. Although junior librarians may lack the same experience, they probably have a fresher outlook vis-à-vis their seniors. Furthermore, junior librarians are likely to be better acquainted with the latest trends and developments in librarianship on account of their more recent preparation for professional examinations. A policy of exclusion vitiates the all-important sentiment of egalitarian brotherhood among staff members. Therefore it is recommended that invitations to attend staff meetings should be extended not only to juniors and students of librarianship but even to non-librarians who perform professional duties.

The sense of collaboration in the determination of library policy at staff meetings raises the morale of librarians. 'The staff meeting is the most usual form of training and is good, in so far as it is carefully thought out and planned. Staff meetings are ordinarily employed to improve the technique of

their particular department and for discussion of books, and have the underlying purpose of promoting *esprit de corps.*"[38]

The routine-ridden and businesslike staff meetings of times past were rarely intended to serve the educational improvement of librarians. The transaction of official business matters, though not unimportant, was usually overrated. On those rare occasions when certain chief librarians condescended to discuss policy matters with their staff, the fear of being accused of disloyalty and insubordination deterred many from openly disagreeing with their chief. 'Staff meetings, like the staff manual, have a long history. I refer, of course, not to the social guild, but to the periodic, regular, more often irregular, meetings of staff for the purposes of explanation, instruction, criticism, discussion, and suggestion. In a few libraries, I believe that staff meetings have acquired a somewhat sinister significance, as they are liable to occur only when some occurrence has caused the chief librarian to lose dignity and hair, either or both. The staff is then put, not on the spot, but certainly on the mat. Large library systems usually have a regular meeting of senior officers, including, of course, the all-important branch librarians. In the smaller library systems the much more intimate contacts between the chief and deputy librarians and even the most junior members of the staff may seem to make the staff meeting redundant. I am not of this opinion, as I have found the staff meeting very useful. Referring to the minutes of the first few meetings at Dover, I find that suggestions brought to my attention by various members of the staff and adopted, ranged from the revision of the wording of registration cards and other printed stationery to the rearrangement of shelving accommodation, and the partial reorganization of staff duties. These suggestions were very useful to me, and, while all of them might have come through more informal channels, the framework of organization undoubtedly brought them sooner and, perhaps, more effectively.'[39] 'Staff meetings are invaluable for developing an understanding of library policies. This is a two-way process. Staff members voice their suggestions, ask their questions. Some of the staff suggestions save much time and

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[38] 'In-service training' (In *Personnel administration in public libraries* by Clara W. Herbert
Chicago: American Library Association, 1939 p. 90) .

[39] 'The internal organization of staff training' by W. A. Munford *Library Assistant* Vol. 33 No. 10 Nov 1940 p. 187

money as well as temper. No one person, be he administrator or page, has a corner on ideas. For an effective organization with high morale, everyone's ideas should be considered and opportunity given for voicing opinions. On the other hand the librarian has a chance to explain decisions and board actions to the staff members and to acquire from them new ideas for future consideration. In our staff meetings we discuss frankly all recommendations and suggestions from individuals. It is a lively affair because the special programs and department activities are also reported so our left hands know what our right hands are doing.'[40] The staff members of widely dispersed library systems who might otherwise seldom meet are brought together from their far flung service points to discuss mutual problems at regularly held staff meetings. 'An essential means of securing real co-operation between departments and branches, and of smoothing out difficulties as they arise, is the staff conference, which should be convened at regular intervals under the chairmanship of the chief librarian. This is attended by all branch librarians and heads of departments (and sometimes also by deputies), and it provides the occasion for an explanation of new projects, a round-table discussion on future policy, realistic assessment of present imperfections, and suggestions for further improvement of the service. A similar meeting of the whole staff of a branch or department is a useful aid to training.'[41] The discussions should preferably go beyond the mere examination of problems that are of immediate relevance to a particular library so as to include even international librarianship problems. The cause of post-professional education would also be furthered when librarians start reading more widely in preparation for these meetings.

Symposia

Symposia have the advantage of bridging the gulf that usually separates the main speakers from their audience. The consequent blurring of the feeling of 'I' versus 'thou' generates a rare spirit of co-operative endeavour in the investigation of bibliographical and other problems. A symposium is 'a present-

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[40] 'Training the staff to understand library policies' by Mary Virginia Valencik *Wilson Library Bulletin* Vol. 24 No. 8 April 1950 p. 598

[41] 'Staff training in libraries' by W. B. Paton *Library Association Record* Vol. 60 No. 8 Aug 1958 p. 245

ation of prepared addresses by individuals or panels, followed by audience participation.'[42] Those who find themselves deterred from public speaking owing to reasons such as shyness or nervousness could still actively participate in discussions by writing their questions and/or comments on cards. 'It is not out of the question to plan a combination of the panel of speakers and the public discussion methods. It is a well known fact, for instance, that the disciples of the school of thought known as group dynamics, whether or not trained in the so-called Bethel technique, sometimes use this composite method. A given number of people sit around a table on a platform and are asked to discuss a particular point. Elsewhere, in the body of the hall, cards are distributed to everyone who wants to take part, on which they can at any time write either an opinion about the discussion, or a question intended to give it a certain direction. In this way, co-operation between audience and "actors" is established, which usually engenders a spirit of emulation.'[43] The chairman of a symposium should preferably refrain from declaring the consensus of thought and/or feeling of a meeting: first, the 'consensus' could be no other than the chairman's personal and subjective opinion; second, the synthesization of discordant points of view can seldom be attempted without dangerously distorting the ideas of one party or another.

Workshops

A workshop is 'a course or seminar emphasizing free discussion, exchange of ideas, demonstration of methods, and practical application of skills and principles given mainly for adults already employed in the field esp. of the social sciences and the practical and fine arts...'[44] Unlike clinics which are primarily concerned with the practical sides of librarianship, workshops deal both with the theory and the practice of the profession. Since workshops involve 'directed group participation

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[42] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 3

[43] 'Problems facing leaders of international organizations' by J. Milhaud (In *International congress organization: theory and practice* Brussels: Union of International Associations, 1961 p. 14)

[44] *Webster's third new international dictionary of the English language unabridged* London: G. Bell, 1961

stimulated by brief, prepared addresses,'[45] they are particularly suitable for informal discussions requiring a 'give-and-take' atmosphere.

Unless the groups concerned with projects are manageably small, each individual's performance would be guided and supervised neither thoughtfully nor adequately. '... workshop sessions are usually more effective when attendance is kept small; a number of workshops covering identical subjects may be run simultaneously, particularly if all conferrers gather at the close to compare notes.'[46] The personal guidance provided at workshops would probably assist many in discovering their talents and potentialities as well as limitations. 'The workshop, originally developed in the last decade for the study of educational problems, has been successfully and increasingly employed in librarianship. The essential characteristics of a workshop are that it brings together a relatively small group of experienced practitioners in closely related fields of activity. Each participant brings to the workshop a particular problem calling for study and solution. The purpose of the workshop, which is organized around these problems as a group, is to provide a directing personnel and material facilities, such as printed matter, for the study of the problems. A good workshop is a complex affair and difficult to organize for it requires, in addition to an expert staff and adequate facilities, an interested and experienced group of participants, careful planning in advance which will yet permit great flexibility as problems are studied and new ones are discovered, careful direction which at the same time permits freedom of action on the part of the participants, and continuous evaluation. A workshop functions through group meetings, lectures, conferences, small discussion groups, and committees as well as through individual study and reading. A large number of workshops have been conducted in the United States concerned with problems related to such areas as school library administration and organization, school library materials, the teaching of reference work, the library's role in adult education, and the integration of municipal and school library service.'[47] Workshops could be regarded as refresher

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[45] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 4

[46] *Organizing the technical conference* by Herbert S. Kindler London: Chapman & Hall, 1960 p. 37

[47] *Education for librarianship* by J. Periam Danton Paris: UNESCO, 1949 p. 74

courses for maturing librarians. There can never be a termination to the process of maturing: growth is endless.

Workshops are excellent media for the organization of refresher courses. An ideal refresher course should include the following main features: first, surveys of the salient aspects of the subject in question; second, references to new developments and trends with special attention to research projects; third, participation in field work (e.g. interviewing readers in order to understand their difficulties) and practical work (e.g. learning about the applicability of mechanised equipment such as computers in libraries); fourth, discovery of new problems that are worthy of investigation. A refresher course that merely reviews the ground covered in previous education is only a dull regurgitation of already accumulated knowledge. Sometimes refresher courses have to be confined to the reviewing of what has already been learnt. Such courses could be made immensely interesting if previous learning is reappraised in the light of recent findings, new theories and new interpretations. It is feared that the quality of refresher courses that attempt to deal with too wide a range of subjects, during what must necessarily be limited periods of time, would dangerously border on the superficial. The compression of too many subjects into refresher courses would result in reducing the participants to a state of mental exhaustion. Since the success of the proposed system of post-professional education depends, not on any form of coercion but rather on voluntary co-operation, it is prudent to avoid those excesses that are likely in any way to detract from the joy of learning.